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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether reliance on television rather than on newspapers affected the way people made voting decisions. Specifically, it focused on whether television reliance was associated with greater candidate image evaluation and newspaper reliance with greater issue importance in the prediction of voter preferences. Telephone interviews were conducted with 97 adults two months before, immediately before, and immediately after the November 1980 Presidential elections. In addition, cross-sectional data were collected from a sample of 470 adults. Subjects responded to questions concerning their candidate preference and media use. They also responded to questions concerning the images of each candidate and the perceived stance of each candidate on several issues. The results showed that in their subjective estimates of how much the personal qualities (images) of the candidates entered into their voting decisions, the television reliant respondents were more likely to give higher estimates than were the newspaper reliant respondents. In addition, more voter preference was accounted for by image favorability among the television reliant than among the newspaper reliant respondents. No difference was found between the groups in their attribution of importance to the candidates' stances on the issues. (FL)

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Theory and Methodology Division

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ISSUES AND IMAGES:

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA RELIANCE IN VOTING DECISIONS

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Issues and Images: The Influence of Media Reliance in Voting Decisions

The growing public reliance on television news has been accompanied by increasingly heated accusations that this trend has helped to erode the American electoral system. Critics argue that television has brought about undesirable changes to the conduct of campaigns, to the content of media coverage, and ultimately to the way the audience makes voting decisions. Political candidates are said to be forced into the banalities of image politics by the television news focus on the "horse race" features of the campaign (Patterson and McClure, 1976). As a result, voters may lack information about the candidates' stands on issues and may become confused and even mistrustful of the political system (Hofstetter, 1978; Robinson, 1976).

If television has such negative effects on the political process, then we can expect that voters most reliant on television as an information source will show such effects in the form of lower information levels and less positive system attitudes than those depending more on newspapers. More pertinent to the present research is the expectation that reliance on a given medium should affect the criteria voters use to make up their minds in election campaigns. Despite the strength and simplicity of the media reliance argument, the research evidence is fragmentary and inconsistent.

In our 1980 AEJ convention paper titled "Beyond Mere Exposure..." (McLeod, Luetscher and McDonald, 1980), we detailed reasons why the media reliance research is so ambiguous. First, the various studies have dealt with very different types of effects. Certain types of effects are easier to demonstrate then others. Second, a wide variety of control strategies have been used. Studies without controls are more apt to show reliance effects than those using more stringent controls.

Finally, there is little consistency in the conceptualization and measurement of television and newspaper reliance. Some studies have treated reliance as being synonymous with use and have employed measures involving time spent, frequency of use of various types of content, and level of attention to the medium. Others have measured which medium the respondent reports relying on or depending upon most for news. We have adopted the last approach, using the person's ranking of sources relied upon.

Self report reliance measures require better explication. The most basic question is whether such measures represent meaningful judgments to audience members or, alternatively, that they are unreal distinctions forced on respondents by researchers. To the extent that they are merely forced judgments, the responses received should be unreliable and hence invalid. We have been able to examine the test-retest reliabilities of self report reliance rankings taken over a one year period (McLeod and McDonald, 1981). The reliance test-retest coefficients are about as high as other measures of media time and content use despite their lower variances (average r=.43 vs. .59 exposure time, .39 public affairs content, .40 public affairs attention, n=589). Whatever reliance questions measure, they appear to tapping reliable responses.

Our research reported here last year was the first attempt to get at the "whatever" of reliance measures through empirical explication (McLeod et al., 1980). One possibility is that self reported reliance is simply isomorphic to media exposure. To check this possibility, we regressed newspaper and television reliance on various media use measures. Time spent with each medium, exposure to public affairs, attention paid to public affairs content, two gratification dimensions, and three media attitude questions (a total of 11 variables) accounted for only 27% of the variance in newspaper reliance and 32% for that in television reliance. No single measure dominated. The number of days read and reading of public affairs content were the best predictors for newspaper reliance while the frequency of news viewing and seeing

television as the more convenient source provided the largest beta coefficients for television reliance. It appears that reliance on a given medium is a combination of behaviors, attitudes, and motives not reducible to a single exposure measure. The weak prediction of reliance overall suggests the development of other measures to clarify the mysteries of the meaning of reliance.

The research evidence is particularly inconsistent with respect to system values. Robinson (1975, 1976) reported that those most dependent upon television for campaign information tended to be lower on certain efficacy and trust measures than were those relying more on the print media. Miller, Goldenberg and Erbring (1976), using the same Center for Political Studies data set as Robinson but examining media exposure rather than reliance, failed to replicate these findings. Becker and Whitney (1980) found television dependence to be related to mistrust of local government officials and to feelings of noncomprehension of local affairs, but there was no effect on trust of national government officials. O'Keefe (1978) found that television reliance had less impact on political values than did newspaper reliance overall, but that television effects were stronger than were those of the print media among the lesser educated and politically uninterested respondents.

There is greater uniformity of findings regarding the superiority of newspapers over television in the conveying of political information to the audience. Becker and Whitney (1980) found television dependence was consistently related to lower levels of national political knowledge even after stringent socioeconomic controls were applied. McLeod, Bybee and Durall (1979) found that television reliance and exposure to news on that medium were unrelated to knowledge gain during the late campaign of 1976 while the corresponding measures for newspapers showed significant gains not only in knowledge, but in involvement and participation as well. The differences were also manifested in a non-campaign period when, after controlling for education and age, television reliance was found to be negatively

related to economic knowledge and to participation in political matters (McLeod, Luetscher and McDonald, 1980). Newspaper reliance was positively related to both economic knowledge and participation.

In addition to the main effects and interactions of media reliance found in the studies cited above, two studies have revealed interesting findings by treating television and newspaper reliance as a contingent condition by sorting their samples into the two reliance groups (McLeod, et al., 1980; Miller and Reese, 1980). In each case, the effects of exposure to a given medium were limited almost exclusively to those indicating reliance on that medium.

Apart from the indirect evidence that television reliant voters are less likely to acquire knowledge during the campaign, we know very little about differences that media reliance might have on how people go about making voting decisions. Critics of television news have emphasized a distinction between electoral choices based on the issue positions of the candidates and those reflecting the perceived images or personal qualities of the contenders. The former is seen as a more rational and cognitively based strategy in contrast to the less rational and affectively determined choices based on images. It is assumed that television news, because it is so firmly committed to the visual image, maintains a more consistent focus on candidates and their campaigning behaviors than do newspapers. Further, the time restrictions on television news constrains that medium's ability to develop issues as fully as do the print media. Thus, individuals most reliant on television should show greater impact of candidates' images on their voting decisions while newspaper reliant voters should place greater emphasis on how close they perceive the candidates to be to their own positions.

O'Keefe (1975) reviewed the political campaign literature and concluded that along with the decline of party identification as a predictor of candidate preferences there has been a corresponding rise in the importance

of both campaign issues and candidate images. Many studies have shown the importance of perceived agreement between the voter and the candidates on issues (Key, 1966; Converse, Miller, Rusk and Wolfe, 1969; Flanigan, 1972; Sears and Whitney, 1973; Sherrod, 1971). Other studies suggest that the voter's perception of candidate images also predicts vote intention independent of party identification (Weisberg and Rusk, 1970; Mendelsohn and O'Keefe, 1975). But apart from the Mendelsohn and O'Keefe (1975) and McLeod, Durall, Ziemke and Bybee (1979) studies, few investigations have simultaneously examined both issues and images in relation to vote intention. It is important to do so because the issue and image measures may be highly correlated and conceptually blurred. As O'Keefe (1975) says, "..the frequently drawn party-versus-issue-versus-image trichotomy does little justice to the complexity of attributes used by the voters in candidate selection." He cites data to show the varying importance of issues and images depending upon the type of selection (clear vs. unclear ideological differences) and the time of voter decision (early vs. late).

The time at which the voter makes a decision seems to be a variable that makes the relationship between images and issues even more complex. While early deciders are usually assumed to be more informed, they may be in fact more affectively than cognitively bound according to their choices, according to O'Keefe and Atwood (1981). They cite a reanalysis of the 1976 campaign data of Kimsey (1977) and Kimsey and Atwood (1979) which found little association between the early deciders' cognitions concerning candidates and their voting choices. This is consonant with other findings that candidate affect can have a strong effect on candidates' issue positions (Kinder, 1978; Markus and Converse, 1979). The direction of influence from images to perceived issue stands was replicated in analyses of the 1972 and 1976 national survey data (Page and Jones, 1979).

Although evidence is lacking regarding reliance, research does indicate that media exposure plays a role in changes in issue and image perceptions during the campaign. Blumler and McQuail (1969) reported changes in issue and image perceptions over the British election campaign was associated with differences in media exposure. During the 1972 U.S. presidential campaign Patterson and McClure (1976) found that voters most frequently exposed to prime time television were the most likely to change their issue perceptions of the candidates. More recently, Patterson (1980) found that television viewing was associated with image formation only during the early primaries, while newspaper reading was strongly and consistently associated with image development all through the campaign. All of these findings deal with media exposure rather than reliance, although the two sets of variables are strongly related (circa .40). None makes the crucial three way link between media use, image and issue perceptions, and voting preferences.

The research question asked here is: Does reliance on television rather than on newspapers affect the way the person makes voting decisions? More specifically, is television reliance associated with greater predictive power of image evaluation and newspaper reliance with greater issue importance in the prediction of vote preferences? The strategy is to use a small panel of respondents and a larger cross section survey to test these hypotheses. Media reliance will be treated as a contingent variable by dividing the samples into greater reliance on either television or on newspapers. The proportion of variance in vote preference accounted for by image and by issue variables within each of the reliance groups will then constitute the most direct test of the television-image-vote preference hypotheses.

METHODS

Telephone interviews were conducted with 97 respondents early in September, 1980. Respondents were reinterviewed in late October and again shortly after the November election along with 470 others. The average length of interviews

was: September, 10 minutes; October, 35 minutes; November, 5 minutes. All respondents constitute a probability sample of eligible voters in Dane county, Wisconsin. The sample was drawn by random digit dialing procedures with selection from each of 40 telephone exchanges proportionate to the number of private telephone lines. The response rate was more than 70 percent, with three callbacks. Interviewing was conducted by trained graduate students and advanced undergraduates as part of a Communications Research Methods course. All interviews were authenticated by the November interview wave. About 40 percent of the sample had graduated from college and the median age was slightly over 40 years.

The dependent variables are Vote Preference for each of the three candidates Carter, Reagan and Anderson. Vote preference for each candidate was coded on a four point scale: sure to vote for the candidate (4); leaning toward the candidate (3); undecided (2.5); leaning toward another candidate (2); and sure to vote for another candidate (1). The measures were calculated separately for the early September round (T1) and for the October survey (T2).

For use as a contingent variable, the sample was divided into Newspaper Reliant and Television Reliant depending upon answers to the question: We're interested in which source you use most for political information. Would you say you use newspapers, friends and family, television, magazines, or some other source most for current events and political information? The respondents ranked the sources and were classified into either newspaper or television reliance depending upon which was given the highest rank. More then three fourths of our respondents ranked either newspapers on television first.

To serve as a comparison with Reliance, the cross-section respondents were classified into Newspaper Public Affairs users and Television Public Affairs users according to their reported frequency of exposure to eight types of media

content: for newspapers, international, national and local news and editorials; for television, evening national news, local news, documentaries, and shows with magazine formats.

Party Affiliation, used as an control variable in the analysis of vote preferences, was measured on a seven point scale: strong Democrat; not strong Democrat; Independent leaning toward the Democratic party; Independent leaning to neither party; Independent leaning toward the Republican party; not strong Republican; and strong Republican.

Education, the second control variable, was measured by number of school years completed.

Image Favorability was constructed from responses to a five point Likert scale used to judge five personal qualities of the three candidates: honest and straightforward; has little concern for the average citizen (reversed); capable of effective leadership; is easily angered (reversed); and incompetent (reversed). The responses were summed across the five image items and averaged. Indices for each of the three candidates were constructed for the two time points, September and October.

Image Proximity was indexed by the complement of the distance between the person's own position and the perceived stance of each candidate (again using a five point Likert scale) on four issues: what the economy needs right now is immediate and substantial cuts in federal income taxes; the best way to fight energy shortages is through increased production of energy, rather than by convincing people to use less energy; the MX missile, a land-based multiple warhead system which some people think should be built; and new jobs should be provided mainly by business and industry, not by the federal government. Each candidate had taken a recorded stand on all issues. Again, three indices were built for each of the two interview waves.

Time of Decision was constructed from responses to the question, "Do you remember when you first decided to vote for your candidate? Was

it before the Wisconsin primary in April, between the Wisconsin primary and the conventions this summer, during or soon after the conventions, or within the last four weeks?"

Respondents who recalled when they made their voting decision were then divided into three categories; early deciders (before April), campaign deciders (between April and September), and late deciders (during the last four weeks before the election). If respondents were planning to vote but had not yet decided whom to vote for, they were also considered late deciders.

In addition, Perception of Influence on Vote decision was analyzed. Respondents were asked how much party affiliation, candidate's stands on issues, candidate's personal qualities, and candidate's chances of winning the election influenced their vote (in terms of a lot, a little, or not at all).

Hierarchical least-squares regression constitutes the basic method of analysis (Cohen and Cohen, 1975). In the analyses of Vote Preference, Party Affiliation and Education are introduced as first block of variables followed by either the three candidates Image Favorability indices or their Issue Proximity measures. Results are presented in terms of the proportion of variance accounted for by Party Affiliation, Education and the image and issue variable blocks. Significance tests for the incremental variance added by the image and issue blocks are available from the formula:

$$F = \frac{(R^2_{Y \cdot AB} - R^2_{Y \cdot A}) \,/\, k_B}{(1 - R^2_{Y \cdot AB}) \,/\, (n - k_A - k_B - 1)}$$

Here $R^2_{Y \cdot AB}$ is the variance in Vote Preference accounted for by the two control variables (Party Affiliation and Education) plus the three Image Favorability or Issue Proximity variables, $R^2_{Y \cdot A}$ is the variance accounted for by the two control variables alone, k_B is the number of variables (3) in the second image or issue block, $1 - R^2_{Y \cdot AB}$ is the variance not accounted for by all five variables, and $n - k_A - k_B - 1$ is of the sample size minus the number of variables in the

first two blocks (5) minus 1. Degrees of freedom for F are 3, $n - k_A - k_B - 1$.

Our basic hypotheses are not tested by this formula directly, however. Because they refer to the differences between two incremental variances (e.g., that the Image Favorability incremental variance will be higher in the television reliant group than in the newspaper reliant group), it is necessary to extend the formula. If we were dealing with a single image or issue variable add media reliance was a continuous variable rather than a dichotomy, we would test the hypothesis by creating a Image Favorability x Television Reliance interaction variable and testing the significance of its incremental variance beyond the variance accounted for by the two control variables and the two main effect variables. But the development of three interaction terms with a common dichotomous main effect variable (reliance) creates severe multicollinearity problems. It is more reasonable to extend the basic incremental variance formula, taking the difference between the two incremental variances (e.g., Image Favorability incremental variance among the newspaper reliant) divided by the number of image or issue variables (3) as the numerator. The denominator becomes the variance in the total sample not accounted for by the two control variables and three image or issue variables (also in total sample) divided by the total sample size minus one minus the number of variables in the separate samples combined. The test appears to be an appropriate and conservative one.

To the extent that comparisons between the two reliance groups may be confounded by having the two control variables accounting for very different proportions of variance, we may need to adjust for the fact that each of the separate sample increments will be based on rather different denominators. To adjust for this possibility, we have calculated the separate sample increments based not on proportions of total variance added by the block (as in the procedure discussed above) but rather on the variance added by the block in each

group relative to the proportion of variance that remained after the first block's variance had been removed. This is the Squared Multiple Partial coefficient mentioned in statistics texts (Coxton and Cowden, 1967) but seldom used in social science. We then have tested the difference between these coefficients of our two samples using all other components of the test of the differences in total incremental variance as discussed above except that the residual variance of the denominator is based on that variance not accounted for by the control variables.

The number of respondents used in a given analysis may be less than the total samples of 97 (panel) and 567 (cross-section) because respondents with missing data on any variable in the analysis have been removed. The number of cases used in a given analysis is indicated at the bottom of each table.

RESULTS

Had the voting decision processes of our 1980 respondents been consistent with the classical electoral models presented by Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) and Berelson et al. (1954), there would be little reason to analyze shifts in candidate support among our panel. The classical limited effects model asserts that the large majority of voters have made up their minds by early Summer and, hence we would have found little change to examine in the September to October period studied here. Recent elections, however, have revealed far greater proportions of voters shifting late in the campaign and our present sample is no exception. Table 1 shows net gains of over 8 percent for Carter and more than 6 points for Reagan with corresponding losses for Anderson (from 22% to 14%) and the very minor candidates. The late October survey results came within 2% of the proportions that each of the candidates actually received in the November Dane County vote.

Almost half of both our panel and the larger cross section survey reported making their decision after Labor day. The combination of the "sure" proportions for all candidates in Table 1 indicates that only 37% were certain of their choices in September; the proportion of sure respondents climbed to 67% by late October.

An interesting discrepancy is revealed for Anderson, whose image is more favorable than that of Reagan in September and better than that for either candidate in October (3.64 vs. 3.27 and 3.12 overall, Table 2). In terms of the voting preferences, however, Anderson was found to be trailing the other two candidates and to have declined from September to October in the percent intending to vote for him (see Table 1). A similar anomaly is shown for Issue Proximity in Table 2 where Anderson is perceived as closer to the respondents' own positions at both time points. That is, while John Anderson was gaining a larger advantage over his opponents in terms of both image and issue, his candidacy in terms of voting behavior was rapidly eroding into oblivion.

Comparisons between newspaper and television reliance groups regarding Image Favorability reveal that television reliant respondents are more favorable to Carter and less favorable to Anderson in September (Table 2). Both these marginal differences even out in the October comparisons. Differences between the two reliance groups are also minor with respect to Issue Proximity. Television reliant respondents are somewhat closer to Reagan and Carter than are the newspaper reliant in the first round and are slightly further from Anderson in the October wave.

Perceived Importance of Images and Issues. A preliminary test of the hypothesized relationship between media reliance and the importance of images and issues was provided by a set of questions asked respondents after the election. They were asked to evaluate on a three point scale the importance that four factors had played in their presidential voting decisions: political parties of the candidates; the candidates personal qualities (images); the issue stands of the candidates; and the likelihood of each candidates' winning.

The prediction that the television reliant respondents would perceive greater importance of personal qualities entering into their decisions is upheld in Table 3. In contrast, there is absolutely no difference between

the two groups regarding the perceived importance of the issue stands. It should be noted, however, that the mean of 2.68 is close to the ceiling and the social desirability of appearing rational by reporting the importance of issue stands may have affected all respondents.

It is also interesting to note that party affiliation finishes a distant last even exceeded by the likelihood of each candidate winning (see Table 3). Of course, this situation is affected by the fact that some of our respondents did not vote for John Anderson even though he was rated best in both images and issues. Instead, the respondents chose to "not vote" for Anderson because they perceived that he did not have a chance to win.

Actual Importance of Images and Issues. A more direct test of the media reliance hypotheses was provided by examining the proportions of variance in Vote Preferences accounted for by Image Favorability and Issue Proximity. Table 4 shows the incremental variance of these variables along with the contributions of Party Affiliation and Education. It is apparent that Party Affiliation, as always, played an important role in determining vote preferences. Its importance grew from September to October for the Carter and Reagan candidacies and declined during the same period for Anderson largely as a result of Democrats deserting him for Carter. Party affiliation also is stronger for the Newspaper reliant than for the Television reliant groups. Education, although related to reliance on newspapers, shows little relation to vote preferences except for the more educated preferring Carter among the television reliant panel members in October.

Image Favorability bears a moderate to strong relationship to vote preference even after controls for party affiliation have been introduced (Table 4). It is also true that its importance tends to increase from September to October among the panel while the variance accounted for by Issue Proximity tends to become less.

The Image Favorability incremental variance contributions from Table 4 are carried over into Table 5 where the differences between the newspaper reliant and television reliant groups are tested. As predicted, the television reliant proportions are significantly higher for Carter (9.4% September panel, 19.4% October panel, and 6.3% October cross-section). The results for Reagan show even stronger findings (25.1%, 24.3% and 9.0%, respectively). None of the comparisons is significant for Anderson, however, and two of the three are in the wrong direction.

The fact that Party Affiliation was a stronger predictor of voting among the newspaper reliant in Table 4 suggests the utility of converting the incremental variances into squared multiple partial coefficients that take into account in their denominators the portion of the variance not accounted for by the control variables. These are shown in the right side of Table 5. The squared multiple partials tend to show somewhat larger differences for Carter and Reagan than did the incremental variance comparisons while not changing the ambiguous Anderson findings.

The incremental variance contributions of Issue Proximity are shown in Table 6 along with the squared multiple partial coefficients. No clear pattern is shown for the September panel. The October panel data reveals a significant difference for Reagan, but it is in the direction opposite to prediction (18.0% television reliant, 1.2% newspaper reliant). All three candidate comparisons are significant for the cross-section sample, but the size of the differences are small (+2.0%, +1.4%, -2.7%) and in a reverse direction for Anderson. The squared multiple partial differences are largely consistent with those of the incremental variances. The Issue Proximity findings, then, show no support for stronger prediction among the newspaper reliant respondents.

Time of Decision Analyses. O'Keefe and Atwood (1981) cite evidence of interactions between issue and image salience and the time of presidential voting decision. We anticipated that our media reliance hypotheses would hold more

strongly the closer our data collection came to the time the voting decision was made. As a result, we divided our cross-section respondents according to the time of their reported decision. The departure from the Lazarsfeld et al. model is shown again by the fact that almost one-third of our sample was still undecided in late October and another 28% had made up their minds during September and early October.

Our belief that the media reliance hypotheses would hold least among the early deciders is clearly upheld by the Image Favorability data in Table 7. In fact, contrary to prediction, the newspaper reliant early deciders reveal predictive power far in excess of that shown for the television reliant respondents (-12.1% Carter, -4.1% Reagan, -28.9% Anderson). The predicted pattern holds significantly for the campaign deciders with differences near 20% for all three candidates. The late deciders also show significant positive differences for Carter and Reagan, but reveal a reverse difference for Anderson.

Issue Proximity shows the predicted pattern of higher incremental variances for the newspaper reliant group only among the early deciders (Table 7). This holds for Carter (+5.9%) and for Anderson (+12.1%). A reverse pattern of stronger issue prediction for the television reliant holds for the campaign deciders (-9.2% Carter, -10.4% Reagan) while no significant differences are found for the late deciders.

Public Affairs Media Dominance. We argued earlier that our previous research had indicated that media reliance appears to be concept distinct from media exposure. It is possible, nonetheless, that what we have been calling reliance effects may be thought of more simply as effects of exposure to the news and public affairs content of the two media. To test this possibility, we developed separate indices (see methods section) of public affairs newspaper use and public affairs television use.

From these two indices, we constructed a Public Affairs Dominance measure of the relative exposure to news on each medium parallel to our reliance measure. We thus divided the cross-section sample into Newspaper Public Affairs dominant and Television Public Affairs dominant respondents.

Comparisons of the public affairs dominant groups' vote preferences are shown in Table 8. All three candidate comparisons show significant differences opposite to prediction for Image Favorability. Although the difference is large only for Reagan (-5.1%), all three show greater image predictive power among the newspaper dominant.

Issue Proximity data for public affairs dominance are also contrary to prediction (Table 8). The differences are significant for Carter (-3.2%) and for Reagan (-1.4%), the large sample allowing small discrepancies to reach statistical significance. In any case, the public affairs dominance findings do not replicate the results for media reliance. We are not justified, therefore, in equating reliance effects as operating simply through customary patterns of exposure.

Cross-lagged Correlations. Based on our extrapolation from previous research, we anticipated a stronger issue-to-image lag correlation among the newspaper reliant respondents than among the television reliant and a reverse pattern for the image-to-issue lag correlations. For all panel respondents, the image-to-issue coefficients for each of the candidates (.22,.47,.26) tend to be stronger than those for issue-to-image (.20,.39,.00) but only the Anderson comparisons are statistically significant (see Table 9). It is also apparent that the synchronous correlations are slightly higher in October than in September and that the Image Favorability auto-correlations (.72,.69,.45) are higher than those for Issue Proximity (.24,.65,.21). Perhaps these correlations reflect the fact that our image measure has only one measure for each attribute while both the respondent's own position and that of the perception of the candidate may vary over time in the issue measure.

Our anticipation of sequences was upheld for Carter where the issue-to-image correlation is slightly stronger for the newspaper reliant (.24 vs. .18) and the image-to-issue coefficient is much greater for the television reliant (.33 vs. .09). The Reagan data are partly supportive of our hypothesis in that the issue-to-image coefficients are larger for the newspaper than for the television group (.49 vs. .21), but contrary to expectation, the newspaper reliant also have higher associations for the image-to-issue lag (.53 vs. .37). The Anderson data show a total reversal, with the television reliant higher on issue-to-image (.25 vs. .11) and the newspaper reliant stronger on image-to-issue (.33 vs. .20).

The generally lower connection between issues and images for Anderson raises the possibility that his issue stands were not well known (our analyses of accuracy not shown here support this supposition) and hence the newspaper people were late in discovering his stands. In subsequent analyses we will examine the lagged correlations for chosen and unchosen candidates with the hypothesis that issue-to-image coefficients will be highest for the candidate chosen by the newspaper reliant and lowest for the candidates not chosen by the television reliant. The predictions for the image-to-issue lags are that they will be highest for the chosen candidate of the television reliant and lowest for the candidates not chosen by the newspaper reliant.

CONCLUSIONS

We have attempted to answer the research question of whether reliance on television rather than on newspapers makes a difference in the way people make voting decisions. Before drawing conclusions from our testing of that proposition, we might review what we have <u>not</u> tested here. First, we have not examined the question of whether possible bias in the content of television or in particular newspapers helped or hurt any of the three candidates among those reliant on a given medium. We have simply looked at predictive power regardless of the sign of the beta coefficient and have not broken the data by which

newspaper was read. Second, with respect to issues, we have dealt only with the similarity of own position and perceptions of the candidates' positions and not with the accuracy of such perceptions. We do have evidence (not shown here) that the newspaper reliant voters were more accurate in judging candidates' issue stands than those reliant on television even after demographic controls. But the question addressed here is the extent to which the proximity of own and perceived candidate issue perceptions are related to vote preferences regardless of the accuracy of perceiving the candidates' positions.

Two specific hypotheses were tested: (1) Image Favorability will account for more variance in candidate vote preferences among the television reliant than among the newspaper reliant respondents, and (2) Issue Proximity will account for more variance among the newspaper reliant than among the television reliant voters.

Considerable support was shown for the first of these hypotheses. In their subjective estimates of how much the personal qualities of the candidates entered into their presidential voting decisions, the television reliant respondents were more likely to give higher estimates than were the newspaper reliant respondents. Even more impressive was the direct evidence that more of vote preference was accounted for by Image Favorability among the television reliant than among the newspaper reliant voters. In the September interview wave, Image Favorability accounted for 19.4% of variance among the television reliant and only 9.4% among the newspaper reliant averaged across the vote preferences for the three candidates. In the late October survey, the proportions were 29.5% for the television reliant and 13.6% for the newspaper reliant in the panel and 23.4% and 18.8% respectively for the cross-section.

All three Image Favorability comparisons were statistically significant for Carter and Reagan; no differences were shown for Anderson.

The reasons why the images of television reliant respondents predicted Anderson's preference less well than did their images of other candidates is easy to see. Anderson was not well known and his image was faint, particularly among the lesser informed television reliant respondents. Why the more informed newspaper respondents used image characteristics so strongly in their voting judgments is less easy to see. Perhaps Anderson's lack of party affiliation and indefiniteness of issue positions left his image as the only criterion.

The second hypothesis of greater Issue Proximity predictive power among the newspaper reliant was given little support. No difference was found between the reliance groups in their attribution of importance of the candidates' stands on the issues, although the ceiling effect may account for this. The comparisons for variance accounted for by Issue Proximity produced no consistent pattern of difference. Perhaps this reflects the weak set of issues we used for analysis; it is difficult to find salient issues on which the candidates take clearly opposing stands. There also may be a problem in equating our measure of Issue Proximity voting with rational knowledge-based behavior. The fact that the measure of proximity is derived from the perceptions of the candidates' positions rather than on "true" positions raises the possibility that "irrational" distortions of candidates' positions may have been common. Because we know from other analyses that the newspaper reliant voters were more accurate about the candidates' issue positions, it is possible that the television reliant respondents had higher levels of distortion that agreed with their vote preferences. The newspaper reliant voters may have been more constrained in their perceptions by their greater awareness of actual positions.

The reversal of the Image Favorability results among the Early Deciders suggests an important caveat to the generalization that the judgements of television reliant voters depend more on images than do those relying on newspapers. Although those deciding before the party conventions (early deciders) constitute only 22% of our cross-section sample, their clear reversal of pattern deserves further discussion. For this group, current judgements of the candidates' issues and images may have been a consequence of their early presidential decision rather than the basis of that decision. Little relevant information on the three eventual candidates was available on television in the Spring, and the early deciding television voters would have to base their judgements on information received from other sources. Early deciding newspaper reliant voters may have subsequently used their newspapers selectively to reinforce their decisions.

The Image Favorability findings for reliance failed to replicate when an index of public affairs exposure dominance was used. Contrary to prediction, newspaper exposure dominance predicted vote preferences 3.4% better than did television exposure dominance as averaged across the three candidates. This has important implications for understanding the meaning of media reliance. Although reliance on a medium is rather strongly associated with exposure to public affairs content of that medium (about two-thirds of our newspaper reliant respondents were also newspaper exposure dominant, for example), we cannot assume that the reliance findings are simply reducible to news exposure. The dynamics of media reliance appear to involve something other than exposure. The reversal of findings for exposure dominance suggest that the causal mechanism of reliance may lie not in the content of the medium but rather in the characteristics of the persons who rely most on that medium. Future research needs to explore this distinction more fully.

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Table 1. Presidential Vote Preferences in Early September and Late October

Vote Preference		September	October	difference
Carter	sure	13.1%	30.3%	+17.2
	leaning	19.2	10.1	- 9.1
	total	32.3%	40.4%	+ 8.1
Reagan	sure	14.1	25.3	+11.2
	leaning	11.1	6.1	- 5.0
	total	25.2	31.4	+ 6.2
Anderson	sure	9.1	10.1	+ 1.0
	leaning	13.1	4.0	- 9.1
	total	22.2	14.1	- 8.1
Other	sure	1.0	1.0	0.0
	leaning	7.1	3.0	- 4.1
	total	8.1	4.0	- 4.1
Undecided		12.2	10.1	- 2.1
		100.0%	100.0%	

NOTE: N = 97

Table 2. Means of Image Favorability and Issue Proximity to Self for Newspaper Reliant, Television Reliant and All Respondents

Independent Variable			Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.	All Respondents
Image Favorability						
	Carter	September	3.24	3.62	+.36[b]	3.44
		October	3.20	3.32	+.12	3.27
			-.04	-.30[c]		-.17[c]
	Reagan	September	3.16	3.01	-.15	3.08
		October	3.06	3.19	+.13	3.12
			-.10	+.18		+.04
	Anderson	September	3.58	3.37	-.21[c]	3.48
		October	3.63	3.59	-.04	3.64
			+.05	+.22[c]		+.16[c]
Issue Proximity						
	Carter	September	3.55	3.76	+.21[c]	3.64
		October	3.54	3.58	+.07	3.56
			-.01	-.18[c]		-.08
	Reagan	September	3.25	3.61	+.36[a]	3.41
		October	3.25	3.48	+.23[c]	3.38
			.00	-.13		-.03
	Anderson	September	3.71	3.75	+.04	3.73
		October	4.00	3.75	-.25[c]	3.88
			+.29[b]	.00		+.15[c]

NOTE: N = (48) Newspaper; (49) Television; (97) All respondents
Significance levels are: a<.01; b<.05; c<.10 (two-tailed test)
A high mean indicates a more favorable image and greater proximity (less distance) between own position and perceived position of the candidate. (Range is 1 to 5 for both items).

Table 3. Mean Perception of Importance of Party, Issues, Personal Qualities of Candidates, and Candidates Chances of Winning on Vote Decision for Newspaper and Television Reliant Respondents

Dependent Variable	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.
Party Affiliation	2.05 (.75)	2.12 (.78)	-.07
Qualities Personal	2.32 (.65)	2.47 (.59)	-.15[b]
Issue Stands	2.68 (.53)	2.68 (.52)	.00
Winning	2.31 (.59)	2.31 (.77)	.00

N = (244) Newspaper; (190) Television; (454) All respondents
A high mean indicates greater perceived importance. (Range is 1 to 3). Significance levels are b=p<.05.

Table 4. Proportion of Variance in Vote Preferences for Carter, Reagan and Anderson Accounted for by Party Affiliation, Education, Image Favorability and Issue Proximity Among Newspaper Reliant, Television Reliant and All Respondents

	September-October Panel			October Cross-section		
Dependent Variable	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	All Respondents	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	All Respondents
Carter: September						
Party Affiliation	20.7%[a]	16.5%[a]	18.7%[a]			
Education	0.1	4.9	1.9[b]			
Image Favorability	5.9	15.3[b]	9.1[b]			
Issue Proximity	14.0	13.8	11.6[b]			
Carter: October						
Party Affiliation	44.9%[a]	18.6%[a]	34.1%[a]	29.9%[a]	31.0%[a]	29.7%[a]
Education	0.4	12.4[a]	8.8[b]	0.0	0.2	0.0
Image Favorability	14.3[b]	33.7[a]	23.1[a]	23.9[a]	30.2[a]	26.2[a]
Issue Proximity	4.5	7.6	5.9	10.2[a]	8.1[a]	8.4[a]
Reagan: September						
Party Affiliation	51.1%[a]	19.4%[a]	38.9%[a]			
Education	0.9	1.4	0.5			
Image Favorability	4.7	29.8[a]	13.0[a]			
Issue Proximity	7.6	9.9	7.2[b]			
Reagan: October						
Party Affiliation	56.8%[a]	25.8%[a]	40.4%[a]	45.6%[a]	36.7%[a]	41.1%[a]
Education	0.0[b]	1.9	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.6[b]
Image Favorability	8.8[b]	33.1[a]	15.9[a]	15.4[a]	24.4[a]	18.9[a]
Issue Proximity	1.2	18.0[b]	7.1[b]	8.3[a]	6.8[a]	8.2[a]
Anderson: September						
Party Affiliation	5.9%	9.6%[a]	9.7%[a]			
Education	0.3[b]	1.3	0.5			
Image Favorability	17.7[b]	13.0	17.2[a]			
Issue Proximity	14.6	12.0	10.8[b]			
Anderson: October						
Party Affiliation	2.6%	1.2%	2.2%	2.5%[b]	0.3%	0.8%[b]
Education	0.3[b]	1.3[b]	0.5	1.6[b]	0.1	1.6[b]
Image Favorability	17.6[b]	21.7[b]	20.3[a]	17.0[a]	15.6[a]	15.3[a]
Issue Proximity	1.3	8.5	1.6	2.7	5.3[a]	2.5[a]

NOTE: N = Panel: (42 to 47) Newspaper; (37 to 47) Television; (81 to 96) All. Cross-Section; (212 to 238) Newspaper; (169 to 202) Television; (381 to 440) All Proportions indicated are variance accounted for controlling for all previous variables except that Image Favorability and Issue Proximity are analyzed without control for each other. Significance levels are: a=p<.01, b=p<.05.

Table 5. Image Favorability: Differences Between Newspaper Reliant and Television Reliant Respondents in Incremental Variances and Squared Multiple Partial Coefficients for Vote Preferences

	Incremental Variances				Squared Multiple Partial Coeff.			
Dependent Variable	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.	F=	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.	F=
Panel: September								
Carter	.059	.153	+.094	3.77[b]	.074	.195	+.121	3.95[b]
Reagan	.047	.298	+.251	15.22[a]	.097	.407	+.310	14.97[a]
Anderson	.177	.130	-.041	1.87	.189	.148	-.041	1.52
Panel: October								
Carter	.143	.337	+.194	12.94[a]	.259	.488	+.229	8.48[a]
Reagan	.088	.331	+.243	16.20[a]	.204	.446	+.242	8.68[a]
Anderson	.176	.217	+.041	1.62	.181	.236	+.055	2.01
Cross-section: October								
Carter	.239	.302	+.063	20.80[a]	.342	.437	+.095	19.59[a]
Reagan	.154	.244	+.090	33.44[a]	.283	.386	+.103	19.06[a]
Anderson	.170	.156	-.014	2.47	.174	.156	-.018	3.00[b]

NOTE: N = Panel: (46 to 47) Newspaper; (47) Television; (93 to 96) All. Cross-section: (238) Newspaper; (202) Television; (440) All. Incremental variances are proportions of total variance accounted for by the three image variables beyond that accounted by the prior block of control variables. Squared multiple partial coefficients represent the proportion of variance not accounted for by the control block accounted for by the image block in each reliance group. A + sign in the difference column indicates direction of the relationship is consistent with the research hypothesis; a - sign indicates contrary results. Significance levels are: a=p<.01; b=p<.05.

Table 6: Issue Proximity: Differences Between Newspaper Reliant and Television Reliant Respondents in Incremental Variances and Squared Multiple Partial Coefficients for Vote Preferences

	Incremental Variances				Squared Multiple Partial Coeff.			
Dependent Variable	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.	F =	Newspaper Reliant	Television Reliant	diff.	F=
Panel: September								
Carter	.140	.138	+.002	<1	.172	.182	-.010	<1
Reagan	.076	.099	-.023	1.13	.159	.136	+.023	<1
Anderson	.146	.119	+.027	<1	.156	.137	+.019	<1
Panel: October								
Carter	.045	.078	-.032	1.33	.081	.105	-.024	<1
Reagan	.012	.180	-.168	8.12[a]	.027	.234	-.207	5.66[a]
Anderson	.013	.085	-.072	2.00	.013	.093	-.080	2.07
Cross-section: October								
Carter	.102	.082	+.020	4.25[a]	.146	.123	+.023	3.35[a]
Reagan	.083	.069	+.014	3.67[b]	.148	.110	+.038	5.39[a]
Anderson	.027	.054	-.027	3.63[b]	.028	.054	-.026	2.40

NOTE: N = Panel: (42 to 43) Newspaper; (37 to 40) Television; (81 to 84) All Cross-section: (212) Newspaper; (169) Television; (381) All. Incremental variances are proportions of total variance accounted for by the three issue variables beyond that accounted by the prior block of control variables. Squared multiple partial coefficients represent the proportion of variance not accounted for by the control block accounted for by the issue block in each reliance group. A + sign in the difference column indicates direction of the relationship is consistent with the research hypothesis; a - sign indicates contrary results. Significance levels are: a=p<.01; b=p<.05.

Table 7. Time of Decision: Differences Between Newspaper Reliant and Television Reliant Respondents in the Incremental Variances Added by Image Favorability and Issue Proximity in the Predicting Vote Preferences

	Early Deciders			Campaign Deciders			Late Deciders		
	Nsp. Rel.	TV Rel.	diff.	Nsp. Rel.	TV Rel.	diff.	Nsp. Rel.	TV Rel.	diff.
Cross-section: October									
Image Favorability									
Carter	.277	.155	-.121[a]	.181	.413	+.232[a]	.201	.285	+.084[a]
Reagan	.114	.074	-.041[a]	.239	.345	+.206[a]	.139	.276	+.137[a]
Anderson	.380	.091	-.289[a]	.065	.259	+.195[a]	.130	.086	-.044[b]
N =	(55)	(49)		(94)	(71)		(115)	(94)	
Issue Proximity									
Carter	.141	.081	+.059[b]	.087	.179	-.092[a]	.062	.049	+.013
Reagan	.028	.038	-.010	.055	.159	-.104[a]	.115	.113	+.002
Anderson	.184	.063	+.121[a]	.067	.082	-.015	.011	.031	-.020
N =	(47)	(41)		(84)	(62)		(99)	(73)	

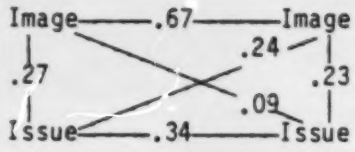
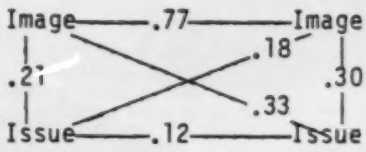
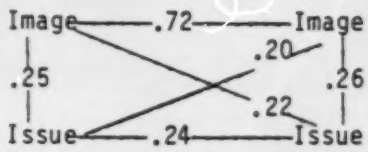
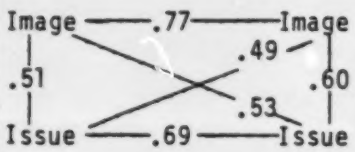
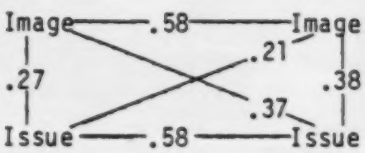
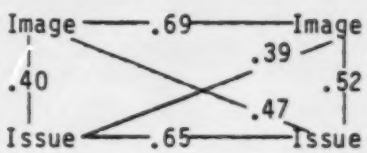
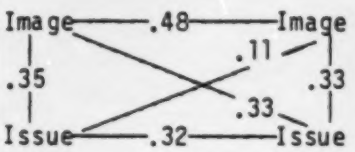
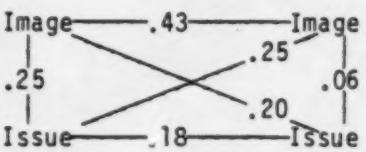
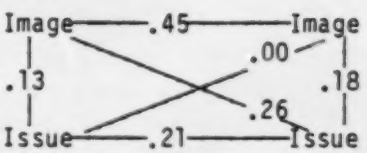
NOTE: Incremental variances are proportions of total variance accounted for by the three image or issue variables beyond that accounted for by the prior block of control (party affiliation and education) variables. A + sign in the difference column indicates the direction of the relationship is consistent with the research hypothesis; a - sign indicates contrary results. Significance levels are: a=p<.01; b=p<.05.

Table 8. Differences Between Newspaper Public Affairs Dominant and Television Public Affairs Dominant Respondents in the Incremental Variances Added by Image Favorability and Issue Proximity in Predicting Vote Preferences

	Newspaper Public aff.	Television Public aff.	diff.
Cross section: October			
Image Favorability			
Carter	.254	.242	-.012[b]
Reagan	.148	.199	-.051[a]
Anderson	.157	.119	-.038[a]
N =	(229)	(254)	
Issue Proximity			
Carter	.074	.106	-.032[a]
Reagan	.072	.086	-.014[b]
Anderson	.010	.022	-.012
N =	(196)	(210)	

NOTE: Incremental variances are proportions of total variance accounted for by the three image or issue variables beyond that accounted for by the prior block of control (party affiliation and education) variables. A + sign in the difference column indicates the direction of the relationship is consistent with the research hypothesis; a - sign indicates contrary results. Significance levels are: a=p<.01; b=p<.05.

Table 9. Zero-order correlations between Image Favorability and Issue Proximity in September and October for Newspaper Reliant, Television Reliant and All Respondents

	Newspaper Reliant		Television Reliant		All Respondents	
	September	October	September	October	September	October
Carter						
Reagan						
Anderson						

NOTE: N = (40) Newspaper; (30) Television; (77) All respondents